



The Literary Magazine of Saint Joseph's College



2 0 0 4 - 2 0 0 5



Measure

2004-05 Edition



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Special Thanks To
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Cover photo by E.V. Henning

Magazine design by E.V. Henning

Printer

Faulstich Printing Company

*Faulstich Printing is owned and operated by **Fred Faulstich**, SJC class of 1960*



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Eldorado, Iowa

Joe Larson

Eldorado is a name associated with legend and treasure and adventure —
But not with Iowa.
Yet, among the rolling hills of the heartland state,
There is a small green sign that says,
“Five miles to Eldorado.”
How many a conquistador would have given his life for such a clue?
But here there is no Incan gold to find,
Only golden corn fields.
Like the Spanish adventurers of old, I have never actually laid eyes on Eldorado.
It is down the road, too far off course to warrant further exploration.
The turn leading to the town —
And I assume it is a town and nothing larger —
Lies at the bottom of the steepest hill within three counties,
A fact that has always prevented us from going there in the icy winter.
But perhaps some day,
When I’m old and have nothing better to satisfy than my own curiosity,
I’ll take a trip to the city of gold that is called Eldorado.



Times Cast and Oceans Bent

Chris Repp

Times cast and oceans bent;
Riddles eschewed in hopes and dreams;
Tree grew for the sake of a glance,
and the tremble of wind upon the leaves



A “Silken Tent” Rant

Danny Waclaw

How Frost could say that she’s a silken tent
I could not tell nor ever care to learn
Since he is *always* right and what he meant
To do is show he needed *not* to earn
Awards, for trophies he would oft’ collect —
Oh, pah, Bob, collect your integrity!
Some people, who through inner-intellect,
produce fine works of art are left to be
alone, forgotten geniuses, while Frost
reaps in his benefits from platitudes
(which come in handy; for he, when he’s lost,
Inserts a few, according to his moods.)
To Frost I say that, though his lines are “neat,”
he who would publish them is no aesthete.



Reflections on the Water

stained glass

Carla Luzadder



A Drive

Natalie Lapacek

"Nat. Nat, honey, are you awake?"

I opened my eyes and sat up in bed as I awoke to my mom's soft voice. I squinted as I looked at her petite figure standing in the open doorway of my bedroom, which emitted a soft light.

"What is it, Mom?"

"Nat, do you want to go for a drive?"

"Mom, it's bedtime."

"Find your socks. And your Cabbage Patch shoes."

I put my Christmas teddy bear aside, and threw off my quilts. Thanks to my ever-reliable nightlight, I was able to get a pair of socks from my dresser drawer and my Velcro Cabbage Patch Kids shoes. Rubbing my eyes, I followed my mom to the front door of our little trailer home.

"Mom, I'm still wearing my pajamas," I informed her as she put on my coat and zipped it.

"It's okay. No one's going to see you."

Then I noticed that she was wearing sweatpants underneath her nightgown. She jingled some keys from the little hooks by the door and walked outside. The gravel crunched under our feet as we walked past our Pontiac. I stayed close to my Mom—the dark terrified me.

We stopped walking when we got to the Maverick parked at the end of the driveway. The Maverick was our old car; it was white and rusty and was Dad's work car. I didn't like the Maverick because it was dusty inside. Later, I would find out that I was almost born in the Maverick.

"We're taking the *Maverick*?" I asked as my mom opened the door with a loud squeak.



(A Drive, continued)

"Yup. You'll be fine."

I climbed into the passenger seat, hoping that it wasn't too dirty. Mom started the car, after trying twice, and we were off the lane and on the highway. I looked out the window and stared at the shadows of the crisp cornfields whizzing by. I loved taking rides.

"Mom, where are we going?"

"Just for a ride, honey."

"Oh."

I stared out the window again, and noticed a change of scenery as Mom turned off Highway 421.

"I don't think I've been on this road before, Mom." I looked eagerly to her.

"Really?"

"Yeah. Unless I did when I was a baby."

I heard my mom chuckle as we rode, the gravel slowly being pushed away by the worn tread of the Maverick tires.

"Lots of farmers like to use this road," she commented.

"Like Dad? Does Dad use this road a lot?"

"Probably."

I looked over at my mom only to see her by the moonlight. She kept her eyes on the road and both hands on the steering wheel. She only moved her hand to brush her thin, wispy bangs out of her eyes. I folded my hands on my lap and continued looking out the window at more cornfields and trees, listening to the rumbling of the Maverick on the crunching gravel.

"I can't wait until it's hot outside again," I said, getting bored with looking out the window.

"I bet you can't, Nat."



"I can't wait because I want to swim in my Sesame Street pool. And play on my swing set. And play with Blackey. Does he stay warm when it's cold, Mom?"

"Oh, yes. He's got a thick coat."

"But sometimes I get cold with my coat. Doesn't he get cold sometimes?"

"The straw in his house keeps him warm. He likes it when we put straw in there for him."

"I know. I still can't wait for it to be hot, though. But then Blackey will be hot and just dig holes everywhere."

At this, my mom laughed, and I was glad.

"That's right. And do you remember what happens after this coming summer, when it's hot?"

"I get to go to school!" I said proudly.

I saw a flash on my mom's face, and then she sighed. I looked out the window again to see familiar sights: IGA, the tiny San Pierre library, Little Company of Mary, where Mom used to work. Then we were back at the end of our driveway, and Mom turned off the Maverick. I took my mom's hand as we walked back up to our trailer. She had left the door unlocked.

When we got inside, she unzipped my coat and I took off my shoes and socks. We crossed the dimly lit living room and went into my tiny bedroom. Mom tucked me in and kissed me on the cheek.

"G'night, Nadlee. I love you."

"G'night, Mom. I love you." I grabbed my Christmas bear and held him close to me. "See you in the morning."

"See you in the morning."

Before leaving my room, she left the door open just a crack. I heard her small, soft footsteps go down our short hallway and then stop at the sound of my parents' bedroom door.

Later that morning, I would be woken up by my dad's opera singing, which consisted of the simple lyrics, "Laaa! La! Laaaaaaa!" Then Mom would make us fried eggs and toast, over-easy.



Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder
stained glass

Carla Luzadder



Guyver Unit 4
pencil

James M. Cochran



Anthropology of Doubt

Mark R. Seely

Confidence often lies buried beneath deposits of self-evaluative strata, the remains of the last failure, its memory receding with glacial speed — an ice-age of doubt leaving in its wake a bleak countryside scoured of its previous landmarks.

So you become an archaeologist and sift through the layers, angst, anxiety, apprehension, hesitation, with finer and finer screens so as not to overlook even the smallest artifact of your previous character, so that you might try to reconstruct your earlier conceit and capture its form if not its essence.

But all you can find are relics, dusty shards, and broken vessels with their contents long since scattered to the elements, museum pieces of an extinct culture, with no contextual grounding, no relevance to the modern era and its new religions and customs. So there is no choice but to start over, to live once again as a primitive hacking meager tools out of rock, fortifying your strength with the flesh of small animals, small successes that never seem to satisfy your hunger for long.

And dream of fire.



Caprice

Becky Scherer

He asks if I want to go for a drive.
It's 2:30 in the morning and we both have to work at 8—
but something about the storm and the sound of his voice compels me.

Sitting in the truck, he says I smell nice.
I'm overpowered by his sweat, tobacco, and Certs.
He is changing the CD, putting on my favorite song.

I can only see his hands every few seconds,
illuminated by the quick flash of lightning
in an uninterrupted country sky.

He drives with his left hand at the top of the wheel,
his right hand on the console next to mine.
He is rolling a black lighter over his knuckles,

weaving it through the spaces between his fingers,
the places where mine should be.
He nods to the rhythm.

He is so much like every other man in my life.
I want to ask him if he knows what he's doing
when he calls during the night,



(*Caprice*, continued)

suggests a sporadic drive,
and tells me I smell nice.
I want to know if his first thought each morning is

"I'm going to end up breaking her heart again today."
We hit a bump in the road
and he looks up before I can turn away.

"What?" he asks; "Nothing," I say.
Surely my blush is visible with the lightning.
I am brought to smile when I think of what would happen

if he knew. If I just told him.
I open my mouth and glance his way
but close it again when I see that he has resumed

his lighter weaving and left-handed navigation.
I look out the window and remind myself:
he's just like every other man.



Homage to Nature VIII

found objects

Bonnie Zimmer



Things to Do Before a Vocal Audition

Teresa Moreno

Dance around in your undies to Elton John's Crocodile Rock.
Put the milk back in the fridge and pour yourself a glass of olive oil.
Throw curlers in your hair and think "why am I doing this?"
Pray the Hail Mary to yourself over and over again.
Call your mother for her disapproval.
Feel nauseated.
Do mouth exercises to "Sally Sold Sea Shells..."
Drive around while singing all the Major and Minor scales.
Call your accompanist every fifteen minutes to make sure he has your music.
Hold your ear up to the audition room to hear the diva that preceded you.
Count all the bathrooms that you tried to throw up in.
Put on red lipstick and hope it'll make the jury swoon.
Repeat to yourself I really need this job.
Walk in the audition room knowing that you are Cio Cio San.
Win the lead role.



Pine Grove III
photograph

John Groppe



Megan
oil on canvas

Mercedes Clark



Wendy

Mark R. Seely

One of the first houses that I lived in after I moved away from home was in an older part of the city where narrow two-story houses huddled closely along streets made extra wide to accommodate trolley tracks back in the days when trolleys were still a convenient method of transportation. The house belonged to my grandfather, who inherited it from my great-great uncle who won it in a poker game. According to grandpa, the trolley tracks were still out there, buried under layers of asphalt, and during lightning storms they could be seen glowing faintly beneath the street.

I looked but I never saw them glow.

The house next door was converted into an upstairs-downstairs duplex by punching a hole in a second floor outside wall and building a narrow wooden staircase off of the front porch and up the side of the house. The conversion had taken place at least forty years before I moved into the neighborhood, and the steps were well weathered and creaked loudly whenever Wendy used them. Wendy was the old man who lived in the upstairs apartment.

His real name was Wendle Dale, and he wasn't as old as he looked. He lived by himself on social security and a monthly disability check that, according to him, government bureaucrats kept trying to steal from him because they weren't one hundred percent convinced that his health problems were due to the uranium dust in his lungs. He worked at the Hanford nuclear reservation for several years until he accidentally inhaled uranium dust. I'm not quite sure how it happened, although he tried to explain it to me several times. Every few years, "them greedy bastards at the disability office" sent him to a different doctor to confirm his diagnosis. And every time he went his lungs lit up the x-ray film "like a Goddamn Christmas tree." "Uranium is like lead," he told me, "Once it's inside you there ain't no getting rid of it."



(Wendy, continued)

Wendy was a hypochondriac—and a conspiracy theorist of the highest caliber. But I believed him about the dust.

Wendy liked to talk. And I enjoyed listening to stories that he told me over and over again. One day in late April we were leaning up against opposite sides of my back fence and he was telling me the story about a raven that he raised as a pet. I had heard the story a half-dozen times before. He found it as a young bird with a broken wing and nursed it back to health. He was just about to the part where the raven saved his life by scaring off a drug-crazed hooligan when his story was interrupted. The newlywed couple who had only recently moved into the apartment below Wendy's came bursting out of their back door, the man was running, shirtless, with his head tucked into his chest and the woman was chasing after him. She was completely naked waving a butcher knife over her head and screaming an endless string of obscenities. She threw the knife at the back of their car as the man sped away down the alley, then she casually walked back to the house, stopping briefly to shout "What are you looking at!" at us with her hands on her hips like a shopping mall security officer. Wendy continued with his story as if nothing had happened. Ravens are special, he said, they have a kind of foreknowledge about things that humans lack—they have a special link to the spirit world. I told him that I was part Indian and that my ancestors thought so too. That seemed to please him greatly.



Kitchen poem – again

Jean Monfort

I remember when Xena ate the chicken.
That wolfhound was so skittish,
But well-fed, so I didn't know why she tried to swallow it whole.
I remember mom in the kitchen,
Her bony hand halfway down the large dog's throat
Fighting the powerful throat muscles forcing the carcass down.
Mom was using her "alpha voice," and I was peeking from around the island in
the center of the kitchen.
"Drop it! Drop it!"
I didn't know who to cheer for;
Mom, wrestling with the dog larger than she,
Or Xena, fighting a woman three times as strong as I.
In the end there was a compromise I think,
With Mom pulling out a bony rib cage and dangling bits of dinner
And Xena, smacking her jaws and slinking off to the living room.



Liar

oil on canvas

Mercedes Clark



To My Cat

Bernard Sell

My cat, Lakota, Paragon of beasts!
The mighty warrior cat who knows no fear.
You're summoned by a box of rattling treats
And perch upon the couch and lick my ear.
At night, in bed, your tumult do I hear
Upon forbidden places do you steal.
Is that a taunt at me? Is that a jeer?
Or yet again did I forget a meal?
You feign indifference but you can't conceal
That I above all others please you most.
Why else would you awake me with your squeal,
Disturbing me with scratching like a ghost?
You have but little brain, but even so
A friend like you I'll never have, I know.



Still Life Insert
pencil

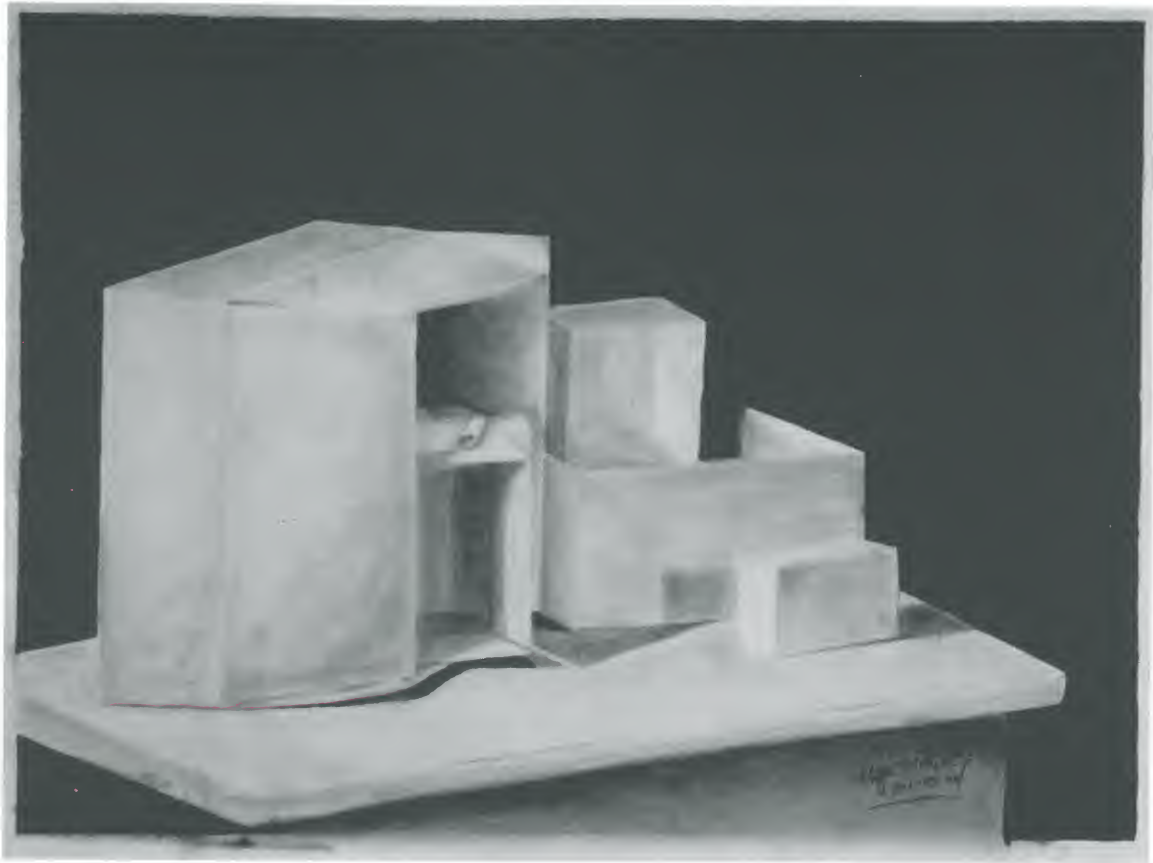
Ashley Fetgatter



transitional shift

melissa alba

crunching . . . crackling . . .
a symphony of synchronized sounds
descend upon delighted ears.
the fallen flora of autumn are full of fun with
colorful shades satisfying to the eyes which
conceives an attractive arrangement of accidental art.
sneaky squirrels scramble around searching for food
on the ground. bubbly birds flying above
in V-formation head down south
while hibernating gopher holes make their
sporadic appearance on the floor of the earth.
a sleeping slumber befalls the scene
as sparkling snow covers the canvas.
the severity of white stirs the coals within the
fire place which sends out smoky whispers
through the chimney tops.
not the joyful clamor of leaves,
but the warming din of wood burning.
crackling. . . crunching. . .



Still Life
pencil

Elysa Rust



Black Paper Drawing

pencil

Alison Cole



Let Me Go

Teresa Moreno

Here I am sweetly tortured staring at an old photograph,
I'm still trying to rid him from my bones and get him out of my mouth.
It's like he climbed into my heart just to find a way to rip the chambers apart,
And I don't comprehend why he became choked up when he decided to say
good bye.

And if he loved me, he wouldn't have let me go.

The dark purple sheets had no wrinkles and felt soft to the touch,
It was there that he laid me down and stroked my skin.
And even though I gave my consent, I still wept because my soul wasn't willing.
Not knowing what to do, I began to drown past regrets in tea and Newport
cigarettes.

And if he loved me, he wouldn't have let me go.

The ash tray shows that I've been up all night living in disgust
Each man hasn't filled the void like I thought he could,
And I don't understand why I'm setting myself up for my own suicide.
Each time I try, I kiss a piece of myself good bye and it's never going to be found
again.

And if he loved me, he wouldn't have let me go.



Close-up Study
photograph

Dominika Gawor



Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend

Becky Scherer

I knew it was over for us the third time he bought me earrings. He was always very good to me in that way — he bought me whatever I wanted, which was usually nothing. And when I didn't want anything, he'd pick out something on his own. He had beautiful taste and never came home with anything less than Tiffany's. Any normal girl would have been madly in love with him — which I was. Any normal girl would have wanted to marry him — which I did. Any normal girl would have been bursting at the seams with happiness — which I was not.

He didn't listen to me. He loved the idea of me more than he actually loved me. His family had always wanted him to marry a white girl from a rich family. To them, I was simply a stereotype. But don't get me wrong; they all liked me well enough — his sister Carmine told me once that I was the only girl Adrián had ever brought home who they didn't talk about in Spanish behind her back. I picked up quickly on some words and phrases, but I just couldn't bring myself to speak anything but flawless English in the presence of any of them. That was the thing. It was never hard for him to dive into my world and pretend everything was just that easy. It was harder — damn near impossible — for me. I hate that there is a distinction between "my" world and "his" world here, and I hate even more that I feel the need to point it out — but there is, and I do.

The last time I ever spoke to him, the air hanging in the gap between the worlds — the small sliver of existence we called "our world" — was thick and heavy with anxiety. We were watching The Cubs when I got a phone call from a boy I knew from high school. Surprised to hear from him after so long, I took the cordless phone into my bedroom so Adrián wouldn't get mad. He hated when I talked through a game. From the bedroom, I heard him clanking dishes in the



kitchen and the hollow ring of a large pot landing on the ceramic tiled floor. Quickly, I ended my conversation and made my way to the brightly lit room. I stood in the doorway a few moments, watching him open each cabinet and then slam it shut, not really looking for anything in particular other than a good way to make a lot of noise.

I cleared my throat. “Whatchya doin’?” I asked earnestly.

“Who the fuck was that?” he answered, his thin lips curling into the usual half smile that meant he was pissed and I was gonna get it. Although Adrián’s English was usually thick and broken, he never seemed to have a problem figuring out where to place the plethora of curse words he was familiar with.

Determined not to start the same fight about the way he controls every aspect of my life, I smiled and played along. “Remember me telling you about my friend Mark from high school? The one I fixed up with that girl – Elizabeth. We met her on the train once. Well, that was Mark calling to say they just got engaged and want to take us out to dinner.” I looked up from the nachos I had begun to prepare for him – he was always easier to deal with if he had food in his stomach.

“Listen,” he said sternly, the smile still present on his lips. Maybe my sustenance tactic wouldn’t be working today. He grabbed my wrist and shoved the watch boasting the *Tiffany & Co* logo into my face. “Remember who gave you this – remember where you belong. I don’t want to eat with your fucking friends.” He grabbed his keys and left. Adrián was like that. Nothing was too small to make him drive out of “our” world in a fit. I cleaned up and sat down to wait the inevitable thirty minutes it would take him to return, little blue box hidden in his large tan palm. I just hoped it wouldn’t be earrings again.

Sometimes I think he buys me things every time he goes out and saves them up for the next time we fight. I imagined a nice stockpile of cashmere, robin’s egg blue boxes, and expensive chocolates – his back-up plan – in a corner of his apartment, waiting to play the peacemakers. It pissed me off that he thought I was “that” kind of girl. Sure, everyone likes to get presents from time



(Diamonds, continued)

to time; I'm no exception—but the extravagant gifts he constantly lavished upon me made me more uncomfortable than forgiving. But I always accepted, and I always forgave. My friends didn't understand why. I told Hannah once that it was his face, the look in his eyes that made me keep quiet about his mistakes. I can tell he really is sorry, I'd tell her, and he's just doing things the way he thinks they should be done. Before me, everything he'd learned about "white people" came from TV shows—mostly soap operas. He was following suit: I couldn't blame him if this wasn't Melrose Place and our zip code wasn't 90210. He didn't know that not every problem could be solved with posh presents. Similarly, I had never known anyone from Cuba before him, and, for a while, I felt like Lucille Ball—I even watched "I Love Lucy" reruns and took notes at one point. We were both trying our best.

A car door slammed shut somewhere nearby. When I heard a knock at the front door, I knew it was his brand new 2004 Lexus door that had slammed shut. I didn't move. Within a moment's time, he was standing in the doorway of the living room, staring at me on the couch, my hands folded in my lap. It worked like this every time, and every time I held my breath for some dramatic romance scene from a movie, comparable to the timeless lovers-running-in-slow-motion-through-a-field-of-daisies classic. It never happened, though. He never even brought daisies. I would have liked dandelions, even, but flowers of any kind were out of his price range . . . unless they were gold plated and trimmed with diamonds.

He coughed. I blinked.

"Hey, babe. Here." He stretched out his arm and made his way toward me. "I brought you somethin'."

"I don't want it." My harsh words hung in the air and I saw him take them in, one by one, and process them.

"I'm fucking sorry, all right? Jesus. My sincerest apologies for crushing your spirit or hindering your womanhood or whatever it is you're pissed off



about. Just open the goddamn box.” He tossed it into my lap, sat down next to me, and turned on the TV. Under normal circumstances, I would have commended him for his excellent word choice and flowing English. This time, I skipped it. I cracked open the box and was greeted by two large sparkling objects parallel to one another and a few centimeters apart. Diamond earrings.

“Earrings. You shouldn’t have.” I closed the box and weighed it in my hand for a moment, then placed it on his knee next to me.

“Well? I’m not gonna wear ‘em. Take ‘em,” he said, glancing from the box, to me, and back to the TV.

“No, really. You shouldn’t have. You’ve bought me earrings twice before.”

“So? They look nice on you.”

The would-be compliment stung deeper than anything he’d ever said to me before. I considered my options: give him another benefit of the doubt and allow him the perpetual “one more chance” I was so quick to hand out, or stand up for myself and tell him. I figured it was time for something new; we’d made no progress with the old way of handling things, why not try a new one? This time, I took a deep breath, steadied myself, and opted for the latter choice.

“I don’t have my ears pierced, Adrián.” He stopped channel flipping once he heard the malignant and uncaring undertones of my statement. Even I was impressed and a little taken aback by how well my voice conveyed what I was feeling inside; the tone of it could have cut glass. “The first time you bought me some, it was funny. We joked around and it was fun. The second time, I didn’t say anything because I didn’t know how. The third time is the last time.”

We ran through the obligatory “this isn’t working out,” “I think we’d be better off as friends,” and “it was good while it lasted” without either of us looking away from the jewelry box that still rested on Adrián’s knee. I didn’t want to see that look in his eyes, the one I’d told Hannah about, the one that had prevented me from being honest – and, in turn, happy – for so long.

When he left, he squeezed my hand and I watched him drive away, the mistake in the blue box that served as the means to an end sitting on the passenger seat beside him.



Still Life
pencil

Alison Cole



An Errand into the Wilderness

Maia Kingman

My mother has asked me to go
and she sends me out the door,
reaching for a jelly glass and a bottle of sherry.

The path to the end of the yard is well traveled.
My boots trace tracks, fitting neatly into their impressions in the dust,
like they remember them from a dream.

The gate springs open almost before I touch it.
Tricky gate,
always jangling like it wants to get away.

And I am suddenly outside
sans mother *sans* father *sans* playmate *sans* chaperone.

I am Ulysses.

I am ellipses . . .

I get my bearings and walk straight through.
The forest unfurls before me, behind me,
telescopes out on all sides,
and I am swallowed whole.

My eyes open, my ears open, my mouth opens, my mind opens,



(Wilderness, continued)

All of a sudden, I am like a house without walls.
Outside rushes inside.

When the moment passes I am looking at a
wolf
who is looking back at me.

His eyes
are the pits of cherries, recently spit out and still shining.

I have a flash of recognition.

I know you. You give me my new name.

*Yes, machen. He smiles at me, baring shiny teeth.
Yes, I will give you a new name, but it is not the kind you suppose.*

He tells me I imagine myself to be in someone else's story.
And that he has been sent here to tempt me —

first to take my time in the forest,
like that wayward sailor staying seven years from Penelope,
straying in the delicious, dreadful Mediterranean deep.

There would be further temptations later, I was made to understand.

I understood.



I had no need of persuasion and rhetorical flourish.

I was living large—

A girl in the wood.

So he left me for a time, and I
steeped myself in the numen of the forest.
Time stretched out over light and shadow.

Much time passed.

Knowing better but drunk on the care-less-
ness of afternoon and the light that sifts its way through
to the forest floor,
I ambled my way to grannie's door,

drawn there by
hund breath and fur, seeing my fate play out before my eyes.

I let myself in without knocking. I
was expected, you see.

This is where the storyteller would have me
take off my clothes and climb into granny's bed.

In the end I am all too willing to oblige,
though I think I'll relinquish the rescuing
at the hands of some dottering, grandfatherly hired hand.

Besides, the woods is calling,
and I've a basket full of sherry and plums
and a new name to discover for myself.



Portrait
photograph

Mercedes Clark



Portrait
photograph

Mercedes Clark



Lighting Study
photograph

Sandra Greene



Foreign Object Study
photography

Sandra Greene



Untitled

Melissa Alba

He opened the door, peeked his head in and coughed softly.

I turned around and motioned for him to come in. I gave him a small sympathetic smile and his eyes looked sadder than they had ever been. We had a way of talking without saying anything, because our eyes said it all for us. I could tell his grief was making a small dent in his soul.

I stood up slowly as he walked closer and both our arms opened and we met in an embrace. Not a hug, an embrace. There's a difference, he would tell me. A difference? How? They mean the same thing. No, he said. An embrace is what you give me, everybody else gives me hugs. Yours mean something. I pulled my arms around him as tight as I could, and he always hovered over me and I felt so small. I wish I knew how to comfort him, but in the end it always seemed like he was comforting me. How do you expect me not to love you anymore, I thought to myself. Just friends. I hated that word. Especially when he used it. I wish I had you, I wish you were mine. That way, I wouldn't have to think about wanting to have you as much.

He slowly pulled away and I thought our bodies were to part, but he leaned his head forward a little, kissed me on my forehead – a long, lingering soft kiss, and then he pressed his nose up against it and breathed me in. God, I never felt so secure and loved in my life until that moment in time. We were both closing our eyes and we were swimming in our souls, in the pain that we both felt caused by two different things. But there was one thing that we both wanted to feel. We wanted to heal.



Final Color Composition

acrylic on canvas

Lindsey Hitchings



Untitled
photograph

Dan Hawthorne



La Naissance de Venus (The Birth of Venus)

Jean Monfort

Yes, it's true.

I was formed after Zeus chopped off my father's — ahem — a lady does not say what.

I have curves — and gorgeous hair

(Is that a fish scale I feel?).

My breasts are small, my hips are large

(I obviously was created for sex).

Admire me, yes, admire my beauty.

I am woman, formed from sea-foam

(Luckily with little body hair — being a goddess has its perks).

I don't care if you're all around me,

So enthralled am I with my own luxuriousness,

(None of these naked nymphs even compare).

Steer on, my little porpoise driving cherubs,

And follow me, angels and hippodromes.

(I smell men on the air).

Off to prettier shores

Worthy of me.



Mr. Paganini
photograph

Liz Henning



A Broken Key

Danny Waclaw

She didn't often clean the keys
to my instrument,
onyx on ivory on onyx again,
over and over,
with ammonia,
making the slender slices glisten
in the autumn sun
from the bay window.

Maybe in the swelling motions
of fragile yet adept hands,
or maybe in the frustration that tiny
crevices create,
but one harsh swipe and the ivory peeled off of
the center A,
a tiny pitch hardly worth taking note of to most.

But nonetheless, the damage was done,
and she stood, shaken not a little
by the blow to her cleaner's ego.
And then she tried to fix it
with those household adhesives
of which cleaners are aware:
silicone, Elmer's, caulking —
all to no avail.



(Broken Key, continued)

She was overwhelmed
by the predicament,
as only old ladies can be,
and searched for an answer
in the silent, elderly bench.

It creaked as the seat flew up,
and within its hollow,
she saw the tiny box
of a piano player's accoutrements:
the music holder,
the pocket songbook for Christmas caroling,
and the tiny metronome for the serious student.
And in the corner, hidden,
she found a vial of Crazy Glue,
coarsely coated from grubby overflow,
no doubt from a person unfamiliar with
cleaning.
Crazy glue? she questioned.
But she tried it,
and the key remained. Solid.
Motionless, melodious.
A beautiful thing.



Colin's Thoughts

Teresa Moreno

I wonder how many people will listen
To my tales of Turkish whores and "chimbley" sweeps.
I clutch my twelve-string for comfort
And gaze at the sold-out crowd.
"We set to sail..." I sing
As my hands form an E chord.
The crowd responds lovingly
So I begin to relax.
My narratives of Billy Liar, Madeline and dead Leslie Anne Levine
Glide through the air
and rest in my admirer's ears .
They listen intently
As the three drunks in the back scream for me to play "Grace Cathedral Hill."
I wonder if I should oblige...
Every night is a new crowd,
Complete with a high spectacle quotient
And full of book worms.
I suppose this is what a creative writing degree can get you,
Out of abandoned Portland coffee shops
And playing for the entire literate indie scene.
At least now, I know someone is listening.



Tar Paper Basket

tar paper

Joey Cuff



Dragon in the Glass

stained glass

Carla Luzadder

Measure 55



The Strength of Survival

Christine Schmelter

Lina Marks narrowed her dark eyes as she looked around the fields that surrounded her. Several carts that were brightly decorated with scarves and beads and cars that had been brought back to life by the careful gypsy artisan hands sat all around in a huge circle. The carts and cars were sort of their makeshift fence, a fence of wood and metal that separated them from the world that hated them and a fence that was supposed to keep them safe, but Lina knew that they would never really put up an sort of a resistance against the Nazis or the Gestapo or the SS, whenever they eventually decided to come for them as they did the others. There had been stories that the Jews had been shoved into tiny, overcrowded ghettos and that gypsies were often beaten to death and then their belongings had been ripped from their dead grasps, but that wasn't anything that was abnormal for a gypsy. Lina wanted to believe that these were just that, stories, but she knew that everything that she had heard rang loudly with the severe truth of the matter.

Lina herself was a gypsy. She was the daughter of the Rom Baro (leader of the clan) and she had been married to Rajoko Marks who would some day become one too. Lina loved the life of a gypsy and she couldn't understand what everyone else's problem with gypsy life was. Sure, they did excel in con jobs and they lived a very nomadic lifestyle and they were constantly at war with the police, but none of that bothered Lina. It was her way of life and she wouldn't stand to live it any other way.

A pair of hands brushed her long black hair from her shoulders, suddenly brought her thoughts crashing back to what was in front of her. She felt the beaded black and red handkerchief that she wore to keep her hair from her eyes was carefully being pulled off. Lina smiled. She knew exactly whose gentle



hands were running through her hair and stopping to play with the long golden hoops that hung from her ears. She smiled as she turned around and came face to face with the man that she loved, Rajoko Marks.

Rajoko was a tall and strong man with chiseled features that made him look like some beautiful creation instead of a person. He had blue-black hair that hung down to the middle of his ears. He smiled back at her, his black eyes twinkling with a brightness that only appeared whenever he was around Lina. He reached forward and he cupped her chin in his hand and he kissed her. Although their marriage had been an arranged one, Lina knew that their marriage was created and survived totally on their love.

"Are you worrying about the arrests?" he asked her as he toyed with the beaded scarf that was sewn on top of her brightly colored skirt. Lina thought for a moment and then she shook her head.

"I will not worry about the arrests until they happen to us! All that those damn Nazis have done to us was take our ponies," she stated bitterly.

Rajoko let out a laugh. "You never were one to stress about the future."

Lina just shrugged. She didn't see the point in worrying about them; if they came, they would either kill them on the spot or send them to the camps where it was only a matter of time until they died. When the only future that is ahead of you ends in a tragic and short life, there really wasn't much of a reason to worry about what the future would bring you.

"It's how I survive," she said softly to no one in particular. Rajoko nodded at the words and he took her hand. They started to walk towards the middle of the camp where a huge fire burned ravenously. Several women rushed around it preparing for the dinner for that night. The men sat all around the fire, arguing loudly. Lina knew that she should be helping the other women, but she didn't want to leave the safety and the bliss of this moment. She knew that a moment like this would never exist again and she never wanted to leave it.

"Rajoko! Lina! Come here, join the talks," the Rom Baro yelled out to them. Lina nodded her head as she pulled Rajoko to her father. She hugged and



(Strength of Survival, continued)

kissed her father and they both sat beside him. He smiled at the two of them.

"Rom Baro, what do you want of us?" Rajoko asked him, taking in the scene around him, day dreaming about the day that he would be the Rom Baro.

"Morello here has run from his own camp or what was left of it in the South. He said that the Nazis were not too far behind him and that they were coming to this area soon. Cleave, says that he heard differently. Now I have to decide who is right and if we stay—" but his words suddenly fell from his lips as he heard a shrill scream explode through the camp and then the horrible sound of gun fire silenced the scream, and shattered the night with its own cacophony of sound. A small boy ran to the fire screaming about the Nazis and the cries sent the whole camp into a mass panic. Lina jumped to her feet and she watched in horror as a group of the SS crashed in from all sides of their camp, breaking down the invisible barrier that the carts and the cars tried to create. The small boy that had screamed their arrival fell to his knees and huge, raking sobs racked his small body and he sobbed with his head shoved into the dirt. An officer, wearing the black and brown uniform of the SS and the great polished black boots that came up to his knees marched over to the sobbing boy like a toy soldier. He lifted his foot and he placed it on the small of the boy's spine and he put the muzzle of his gun to the nape of his neck. Lina cried out as she rushed for the boy.

"Don't you hurt him!" she cried out, loudly and savagely as she lunged for the officer. The officer took his foot off of the boy and he shouted something in German to his fellow officers and he laughed as he turned to face Lina's fury.

"Look men, I've angered the whore!" he exclaimed, sending all of the troops into hysterics. Lina glared darkly at him, her dark eyes burning and she reached her fist back and slammed it into the bridge of the officer's nose. Blood poured down from his nostrils and down the front of his uniform. He cried out in a painful rage and he threw her to the ground, slamming the toe of his



perfectly polished boot into the pit of her stomach. Lina saw red as her stomach clenched tightly in agony. She could hear the Rom Baro scream out something and then be restrained by a two guards and a gun. Rajoko screamed out a curse in Romani. The soldier cussed in German.

Lina spit out a large wad of bloody saliva to the right of his perfectly polished boot, the same one that had met abruptly with her stomach. She wanted to spit all over the shoe, but she didn't want to feel her stomach shatter into millions of pieces again and she definitely didn't want to know what it felt like to have a bullet fly through her brain.

"You stupid whore!" the soldier cried out as he grabbed a large chunk of her hair and he pulled her up to her feet. It felt as if her scalp was slowly being ripped from her skull, but Lina kept her tortured cries of pain silent, even when she felt the gun shoved at the nape of her neck.

She clenched her eyes shut, waiting for the bullet to strike, but she was only thrown forward, face first, into the mud. A shot went off, and Rajoko's strong hands were around her, helping her stand. She looked over his shoulder to see her father lying with his own face in the mud and the back of his head looking like a split, rancid melon. She let out a long and horrible cry of pain and suffering and she buried her face into the front of Rajoko's cream colored, loose shirt. A German order was shouted out and all of them, which were still alive, surged forward to the huge trucks of destruction that had brought the soldiers from the deep depths of hell. Rajoko held tightly to Lina, keeping her face buried in his shirt. He didn't want her to see the horrid sight of her father again, or the horrid sight of her fallen people. He led her to the trucks and her mother, who reached out for her and she pulled Lina up next to her. Rajoko jumped into the truck and he stood in front of the two grieving women. Lina took his hand and she had her head on her mother's shoulder. Her mother looked straight at Rajoko and she nodded her head. In that simple act, Rajoko had been named the Rom Baro, but he didn't feel like celebrating the fact at that point and time.



(Strength of Survival, continued)

"Where are we going?" the boy that Lina had been able to save asked everyone that would listen to him.

"Auschwitz. Heard the damn dogs bragging about it," an older male grumbled. Lina winced. Auschwitz wasn't far from the camp; it would be a short ride to their deaths.

"Look at us! We out number all of them! I say we fight them! We can win!" a boy who had just turned thirteen, shouted his opinion. Everyone nodded their heads, but then they turned to Rajoko, waiting for him to pass judgment.

It stunned Rajoko. The widow had only given him the position a matter of seconds ago, but yet the whole truckload already knew who he was. Maybe they had always known what you would become. Rajoko shook the thought from his head; he didn't have time to ponder matters such as that.

He looked out in front of them and he saw the hellish, black gates loom before him and he felt as if every ounce of his strength had been drained from his body. It was as if those gates had the power to drain any strength or any sense of perseverance from just one glance. Rajoko suddenly felt as if he were a mouse cowering before a cat.

"We don't have the choice anymore. We are here and we are here to die," he said, his voice dripping in defeat and despair. The others clenched their eyes shut in sadness. They had already known what the decision would be; it would have been suicide to try to take on the Germans. At least at the camp, they had a chance of surviving.

The trucks came to a lurching stop and guards and vicious dogs barked at them to get out of the trucks, quickly. The Germans grabbed people by the shoulders, jerking them to the right or the left. The left meant straight to the chambers and the right meant a slight chance of salvation. Rajoko and Lina were



thrown to the right, her mother and the other elderly Gypsies were thrown to the left. The little boy that Lina had fought to protect was sent to the right and he rushed over to Lina and he wrapped himself in the fabric of her brightly colored skirt, as if it were a protective force that would save him from the Germans.

Their little group of hopeful salvations were thrown into the camp, past the hellish gates and into separate, wooden buildings; one for the women and children, the other for the men. A tiny and sickly looking girl grabbed a hold of Lina's arm and she forced her into a chair. With a tight and firm grip of Lina's outstretched arm, she got out a needle and some ink and she tattooed the number, 675821 into the soft flesh of Lina's under arm. Lina screamed out in pain as the woman finished it and then she wrote the number down in the book.

"What is your name? We need your name for the books. The Germans like perfect records," the girl muttered quickly, her eyes forever glancing around, like she was waiting for someone to appear to kill her. Lina stared the girl down and she realized that the girl was in fact a prisoner. The girl was sickly and pale looking and she was as skinny as a rail. She had on a gray dress and a gray shawl that looked as if it wouldn't keep a cool summer's draft away from her tiny frame.

"Lina Marks," Lina stated loudly and slowly for the girl to hear above all of the screaming that was going on. The girl quickly jotted down her name next to her number and then Lina was ripped from her chair and she was thrown into another one. She didn't know who it was that had grabbed her, but she knew that it was either a new prisoner or a guard, because the grip was much stronger than that of the waif of a girl that had given her the new identity. She wanted to look up and see who was behind her, but a loud buzzing noise diverted her attention as it resounded off of her skull. Fat tears rolled down her face as chunks of her beautiful black hair fell down to the floor. Her hair was crudely shaved, leaving some still clinging desperately to her head. A handkerchief was put on her head and then she was forced into another room. A large and buxom female guard barked at her to take her clothes off and throw them into the pile.



(Strength of Survival, continued)

"Gypsies are filthy and decrepit creatures!" she screamed at Lina as Lina stripped down. The woman pushed her into a stream of freezing cold water and then she forced a bundle of clothes into her hands. Lina stepped out from the shower and she quickly pulled on the too large stockings and skirt and sweater over her soaking wet form and she shoved her feet into a pair of work mules. She was pushed out of the building again, and she was forced into a large area that reminded Lina too much of a chicken pen.

Lina rubbed her arms frantically as a loud and raking sob escaped from her lips. Gypsies hated to be caged up in an area for too long and it was starting to take its toll on her. Too much had happened, way too fast for her to react to it and it was all dumping down on her like a typhoon. She wanted her parents, but most of all she wanted Rajoko. She knew that he would still be alive; Rajoko was young and as strong as an ox. The Germans always let the strong ones live. Lina just hoped that the same held true for strong gypsy women, but then again, she could always do other things to make sure she survived. Men had needs didn't they? And she was a beautiful woman and she was sure that she could charm some of the guards if the need ever came to that.

A small, confident smile crept to her lips, but she quickly shoved that confidence deep down inside of her. She didn't want anyone to know of her plans. She walked up to the fence that separated the women's side from the men's and she laced her fingers in through the mesh. She wiped the tears from her face, not wanting to show any signs of any sort of weakness.

She searched through the huge crowd of men, hoping to find Rajoko's beautiful and trusting face, but all that she saw was looks of great pain and desperation. She reached up onto her tip toes and she saw a head, running, bobbing towards the fence. She dropped down, flat on her feet and the smile came back to her lips as Rajoko ran up to the fence. He looked terrified, but he



swallowed his terror as he entwined his fingers through the mesh. He smiled softly down at her and Lina's heart sang as she realized that he still had his love for her. She would have thought that that would have been the first thing that the Germans would have ripped from him.

"They've assigned me to a work crew and they said that if I work good and hard, they will get you into a work crew too! Lina, if we get into work crews, they have to keep us alive!" he declared happily, despite the despair that hung in his eyes.

"It doesn't matter, we'll survive by any way that we can," she promised him. And she knew that it was a promise that they would forever live by.



Proud Porcupine

Jean Monfort

He is sick, I suppose, of hearing about carnivores;
Kings of the jungles, forest, deserts, tundra, water, you name it,
But his self confidence isn't slowed by the rumors
That lions are more likely the creator's keystones.

The porcupine is a popular joke,
Looks like a pincushion, prickling with peppered quills
(The western variety has quills tipped with yellow).
Living on berries, bark and the occasional bone
Or antler left over from a backwoods brawl,
A vegetarian by nature, harmless, a rodent,
Who could fall victim to a weasel, if the weasel were smart.
The porcupine isn't worried about bobcats or bears.

He fears not the dumb carnivores' smiles,
For prickly pincushion he proudly admits
Is what lays over his brown bumpy skin.
And while he may not boast like his African cousin
Of quills one foot long and one quarter inch wide,
His tail's still terrible to the testing tomcat.
Quickly the quills will smack the attacker
(Though he wishes they would stop saying he throws his quills;
He is not the machine gun of nature)
His prickly tail fills the attacker's face
With just a handful of 30,000 quills,
And each quill covered with countless "quill-lites"
That work their way into what they attach to.



Thus does the porcupine, proud pincushion of nature,
Teach lessons to terrible carnivores.
He may waddle or climb like a fat, lazy meal
But he comes complete with his own cutlery
And would be willing to offer attackers
A heaping helping of his prickly pins
which, if lodged in the throat,
Could choke the carnivore's craving for meat
Till he gave up the practice all together.
And the germs that grow on the quills wouldn't think twice
Of infecting the wounds which were offered to them.
So knows the porcupine, yet he also knows
There is one thing he admittedly hides;
His soft brown belly, bare as his nose.
If turned over, sadly, his quills will not save him,
An Achilles heel hidden under thousands of pins.

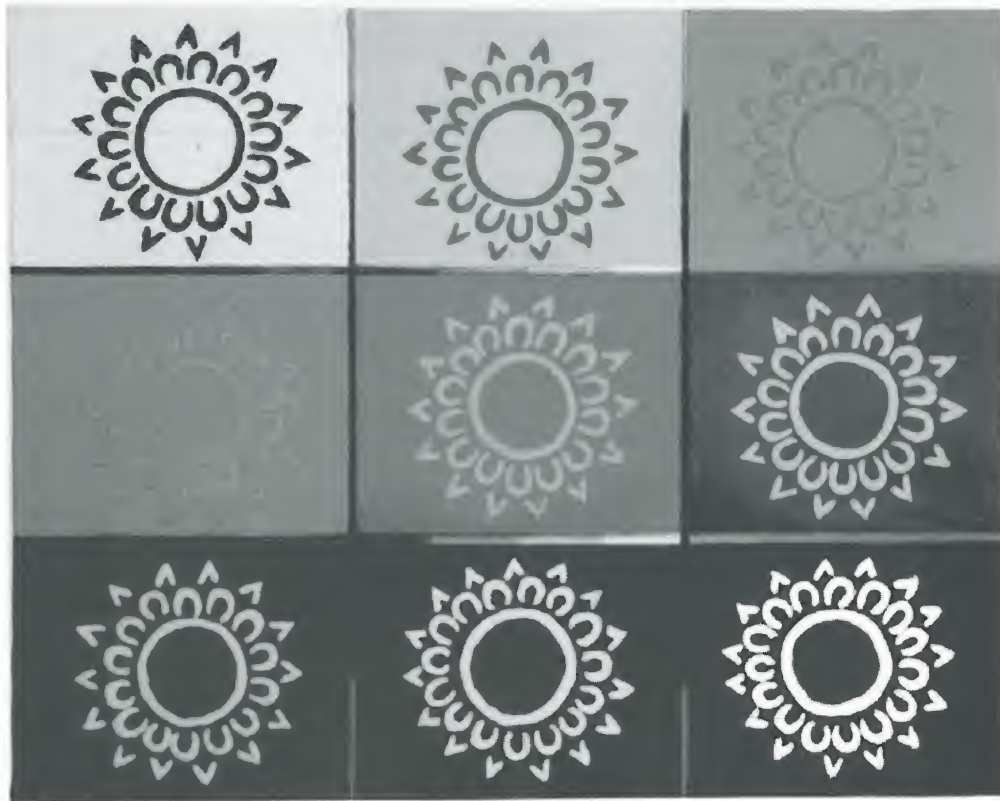
At least, that's what he's telling me from behind the bars
of his comfy zoo cage. Chewing on celery,
munching on his vegetables, he is secure in the knowledge
That I would not risk turning him over.
I'll let him be proud, and keep his quills on him.
He can sit and eat plants till his ten-year life span is up
And no one will treat him like he is defenseless.



Final Color Composition

acrylic on canvas

Ashley Reed



Final Color Composition

acrylic on cavas

Stefanie Steinhilber



Still Life
pencil

Cynthia Haskell



The Unreliable Deity

James Cochran

The day before last I sat hunched over the fossil of a partially shattered rib attempting to discover its species. As I painstakingly pulled away granules of mineral, I caught myself mumbling, “God help me,” under my breath. As if in response to my swearing, I heard a knocking at the window. Usually, I would find this peculiar, considering that the laboratory resided on the sixth floor of this building, but the knock came so loudly that it was all I could do to turn and look in its direction.

Expecting to perhaps see the window cleaner on a scaffold, I was startled to find an elderly man, shabbily dressed, standing upon the exterior sill of the window. Catching my gaze he motioned with a smile to be let in, and I motioned for his admittance in return. However, before I could shout out that the window was locked, I watched him flick his wrist up and the window, without a creak, a crack, or so much as a soft clang, slide open as if it had not been locked at all. With grace he seemed to stand upon the windowsill, as if he weighed as much as air, but that grace faded as he clumsily crawled to the floor. Both feet planted, he stood hunched over by the window, clutching the sill as if it were the only thing holding him up. With him in the room next to me, I was able to view all of him in all his disheveled glory.

“Well Timothy,” he turned with a shout, releasing the windowsill and turning towards me, “This seems like a very nice place here. Very, very clean.”

“It should be, sir. It’s a sterile environment,” I said, getting caught up in the explanation of my own work. Then I stopped myself, “Sir, might I ask what you are doing here?”

“Huh, what’s that, Timothy?” he asked as he dug a finger into his eye and removed a moderate sized clump of dirt. It landed squarely on the floor and



(Unreliable Deity, continued)

right before my eyes began to grow the whitest lily I had ever seen. It was beautiful and grew to a full bloom within moments, and its color was so bright it appeared to give off light. The sight took my breath away, but before I could motion to pick it from the ground, the old man carelessly stepped forward, landing his right foot upon the lily, as he began to walk towards me.

Stunned by the abrupt birth and destruction of the beautiful flower, it took me a moment to regain my composure and restate my question. "Sir, I asked what you are doing here?"

"Now that is a good question," said the old man, "Why am I here? Why are any of us here? Huh, Timothy?"

"Such silliness, and I must insist, sir, that you stop calling me Timothy," I barked unable to contain my discomfort at the old man's intrusion. "If you must know, my name is Paul."

The old man stared at me as if he had just realized I was in the room with him, "Paul? Well of course your name is Paul, Prof. Paul J. Stephen. I remember when you were in seminary, had plans for your church back home, you did. But then you left that, turned to science, studied bones. A Pa...leon...tolo...gist, yes, that is what you became. Couldn't find your answers in the Bible could you? Maybe now you are just searching in a different book, but you're still asking the same question."

"How did you know that?" My voice barely came out as I began to feel small in the presence of this old man, "No one knows about all that. My parents didn't even know. How...who are you?"

The old man giggled to himself, then became silent and turned on me. "But so rude, why so rude? And telling me your name like I didn't already know it?"

"You," I paused at a failed attempt to regain my composure, "You kept calling me Timothy."



"Timothy? No, you don't even look like a Timothy. I wasn't talking to you," the old man said as he appeared to bury the entire length of his arm into his jacket pocket, then returned it to the room with the bizarrely unreal creature in the palm of his hand, "This is Timothy," he said with a grin, "Say 'hello' Timothy." The creature opened his eyes wide, pulled back his lips, and let loose a high-pitched yet guttural gurgle that was almost cute.

"Isn't he perfect?" said the old man, holding him closer to my face.

"Perfect?" I asked, staring at the cute yet unworldly creature. "How?"

"In every way there is. His coat is soft as air, yet able to resist all types of grime and filth. This, along with his ability to control his body temperature to keep him from sweating, means that he never needs to be cleaned. He possesses all the necessary appendages that will allow him to fly, swim, and run at high speeds. He lives on a diet of oxygen and nothing more, meaning that he never needs to be fed, and also meaning that he never makes a mess that would need cleaning up. Beneath his soft fur he has dark skin, two characteristics that allow him to survive in extreme heat, extreme cold and every climate in between. He is the pet that can be taken anywhere, with a temperament that is always kind and loving. In fact, he is such a happy creature that his most moody days make the happiest dogs seem vicious. And to make his companionship all the more enjoyable, he is simply mad about peanut brittle. He will do any trick imaginable for it, and another plus is that once his body is done digesting the peanut brittle, it turns it into gumdrops. It is like having your own living breathing candy machine." At hearing the word peanut brittle Timothy went ecstatic, jumping up and down in the old man's hand.

"Oh, now I have gotten him started. Well I suppose I should give you are treat now, huh Timothy?" Said the old man as he set Timothy down on the counter and pulled off his hat, "Well as it seems that Paul here has no peanut brittle. There is only one thing to do." A crackling sound came from Timothy as he stared up at the old man. "That's right Timothy, we will have to make some of our own," said the old man shoving both his hands into his hat and rubbing



(Unreliable Deity, continued)

them together. "Luckily enough we have just enough particles in here to make the carbons necessary. Aw, here, that should be enough for the sugar," his hat began to billow up, "butter, salt, vanilla," fumes pored from the hat now as it expanded to its limits, "and, arg, finally," white light shined out of the hat, illuminating the old man, "the PEANUTS!" the old man's face twisted in agony as a chaotic boom erupted from underneath the hat. "Done," said the old man as he pulled a steaming hunk of peanut-filled goo from out of his hat. "Oh, still hot." He tossed the hunk into the air with a jerk and it somersaulted to his other hand, landing as a solid, perfectly square, piece of peanut brittle. "Looks good to me," said the old man pulling his hat back on. "Now sit pretty, Timothy, sit pretty." Timothy rose up on his back legs and held out his forelegs, ready to receive the peanut brittle into his small hands. "Good boy," said the old man handing the peanut brittle down to Timothy, which he immediately began to eat. He smiled down at the creature and exclaimed, "Perfection."

"You know what the only problem with Timothy is, don't you?"

It took me a moment to realize he was talking to me, "Uh," was the only utterance I could push from my lips before I saw Timothy squeeze three round gumdrops, all different colors, from his hind end. "Nope, not at all."

"There can be only one. You see, Timothy is so perfect that to have any more than one would be too perfect, and therefore flawed. The multiple Timothys would eventually be compared by their owners to see which was more perfect than the other, and since no two creatures are entirely identical, flaws would obviously appear. One Timothy might be able to fly higher than another, or run faster, so, to make certain that Timothy stays perfect, there can be only one. Do you understand what I am saying?"

"Sure." Dumbfounded, I attempted to move on to another subject. "How did you make the peanut brittle in your hat?"



"Oh easy, just some small scale selective fusion. Child's play. The nice thing about cooking with fusion is that the heat created cooks the confection. A big time saver when you are trying to cook out of a hat. Hey, if you think that is amazing, you should try making a man. Here let me show you."

I cringed at the possibility, but the old man this time did not reach for his hat. Instead he dug his fingers into his bread and removed a large wad of clay. Very carefully he began to mold the clay on the surface of the table until it was formed into the shape of a human male. Leaning over the old man pressed his lips against the face of the clay man and breathed into its gaping mouth. As he moved away the clay man rose off the table and clumsily got on to his feet. He turned and inspected the room by turning his head completely around, keeping the same gapping mouth expression that the old man had made him with. Timothy jerked back at the sight of the clay man rising off the table and jumped into my pocket, still with a piece of peanut brittle in his hands. Then, with determined unrhythmic steps, the clay man began to walk. Unfortunately, he only walked a little way before the vibrations of his steps jarred his left arm and it fell to the table. Carefully, he bent over to pick his arm back up, and broke off at the waist. Landing head first, he looked up to see his legs continue to walk a few more steps before they broke away at the crotch and collapsed to the ground.

"Well, shit," said the old man as he crashed his hand down upon the remnants of the clay man. The old man lifted his hand and looked at the clay puddle in his palm that was once the man. "That's what you get for making a man out of clay from the earth. Wait, I know, I'll make a dog instead." Hurriedly, the old man began to mold the clay again, but I was distracted from his work with the search of Timothy in my pocket. I could feel my hand grasp him, but the moment I would think I had him, his soft fur would let him slide out of my grip. Infuriated, I screamed at the old man who was now setting the clay dog on the table surface. "Do you mind helping me with this thing?!"

The old man turned from the dog and looked down at my hand still in my pocket. "No sir, I will not help you with that. I mean, how disgusting to be



(Unreliable Deity, continued)

reaching in your pocket like that in the presence of company? But don't worry, you won't go to Hell for such a trivial act."

"Dammit!" I shouted throwing my hands in the air with frustration.

"Damn what?" said the old man staring up in the direction of my hands. "Look, if you are going to be asking for a damnation, you need to be a bit more specific."

"Whatever. Forget that. Sir," I paused to control my anger, "I thank you for stopping by, but if you would, please leave now."

"Why, what have I done so wrong that I must leave? I wasn't the one who asked me to be here. The next time you ask for help, don't be so judgmental at who you receive."

"When did I ask for the help of a dirty old fool, with his baby monsters and dirt men?"

"'Old fool,' how dare you?" the old man turned his back on me and scolded out the window. "It is not my fault that you do not like what you see. You are the one to blame for limiting yourself by the eyes in your head. If you see an old fool it is only because you wish to see an old fool. In fact," said the old man turning his back on me, with his eyes ablaze, "it is I who should cry out in ANGER AND FRUSTARION!" As he spoke his voiced boomed and he appeared to grow to a great height, "FOR YOU TURNING ME INTO THE 'DIRTY OLD FOOL'!"

He returned to his normal size and took an apologetic step back, "But that is not my way. Forgive me, I will leave you now if you wish. Come Timothy. We must go." With a single leap, Timothy jumped from my pocket and into the pocket of the old man, which he held open with two fingers. He turned and began to walk to the window then stopped. "Almost forgot." He turned and, reaching into the sold rock of the fossil, removed the rib bone without harming



its surface. "Cro-Magnon, 112,354 B.C.," he said with a single look then handed the fossil to me.

"I'm sorry," I stammered, barely able to speak at all I had just seen, "I didn't mean to insult you."

He sighed and turned to walk back to the window.

"Wait." I reached out for him. "Don't go, I have a . . . nevermind. Thank you, and again, I am sorry."

He paused at the window, sighed again and looked over his should at me, "Go ahead and ask your question. Let us part on a good note."

"Thank you, I, I just wondered, hmm, wondered, why me?"

"Because you asked for me. Few have ever truly done so, and done so without selfish reasons."

"I'm sorry, but I don't remember that. I was just here looking at this fossil."

"You did, but not in any way that you could understand. Besides coming to you I had no fear that you would take any slight meaning you could interpret from this meeting and make it into a belief system or mythology. I have made that mistake too many times already. If that is all, I bid you farewell then."

His mood had changed; he was kinder, more intelligent, and respectable now. I found myself respecting him as he clearly and honestly spoke to me. He no longer appeared as an old fool to me. His hair seemed clean and combed properly as well as his clothes freshly cleaned and pressed. His posture did not seem to be as bad; he did not even appear to be hunched over any longer. All the sudden he reminded me of some one I knew a long time ago, a person I respected a lot when I was young. He reminded me of my father, at that moment he looked exactly like him, wearing the suit he had on the day he died. "And son," he continued, "I am always happy to come and see my children when they let me."

He opened the window and sat down on the sill, turning back toward me he smiled and waved goodbye as he slid out window. I chased after him,



(Unreliable Deity, continued)

reaching out the window, but it was all gone. Not just him, but everything. There was nothing around me, even I was gone. The spark glowed there though, glowing a color that cannot be described through vision, and the spark slowly shrunk, shifted, and then exploded outward in every direction. With it came sound, light, everything, and on the cusp of its ripple across the void, I could barely make out the sound of an old man's voice shouting, "SEE TIMOTHY, I TOLD YOU THIS WOULD BE A GOOD RIDE!"

I felt my eyes close, then open to find myself lying on the floor of my lab, fossil still in my hand. I stood up and set the fossil on the table and looked about the room. My eyes fell upon a small clay dog resting on the table. I reached into my pocket and found a hand full of gumdrops. I smiled, tossed a few in my mouth, then left the lab for the rest of the day.



Dyed Reed Basket
reed

Elliott Zimmer



I blow smoke rings into the air

Becky Scherer

Nick is over again.

They're sitting in Amber's room. Just sitting.

I am sitting alone — silent — in my room,

trying not to long for the kind of silence they share next door.

I hate Bob Dylan, but I press play anyway, just to fill the space.

Brian loves him,

so I listen. I listen to bring a part of Brian back,

back from California and law school and the beach,

(Amber is giggling now)

(Nick is tickling her)

back to me where he belongs,

back to this small town to give me the silence of next door.

I wish I had thought to dry the flowers

he brought when I was sick.

On top of the TV is a pack of Marlboros.

I promised Brian I'd quit, but

I pick up the lighter and

(I'd forgotten how it molds to my hands)

grab the menthols anyway.

I close my eyes as I inhale,

my teeth becoming minty flavored.

I can hear Amber and Nick moving on the bed —

she is telling him to close the door,

afraid for once that I'll hear —



but he coaxes her further and the protests stop.
I hear noises not unlike the sounds of twenty-somethings undressing.
I take another drag and fold my knees to my chest.
I blow smoke rings into the air.
I wonder if she's told him yet about the baby.
Probably not – wouldn't want another reaction like before.
She says she won't go to the clinic alone again,
but I know she will if he threatens her with loneliness,
loneliness not unlike mine,
the kind that mocks and teases and taunts
and shoves another's happiness down your throat and leaves you to choke.
I can hear them walking around next-door, fishing for articles of clothing, I'm
sure.
I notice Amber's shadow on the wall,
her legs drawn up and chin resting on her knees, same as me.
For a moment the image is interrupted by Nick's form –
he is still dressing as he enters the hallway. Buckling his belt, he glances in my
room.
He asks for a cigarette even as he shoves his fingers into the soft pack, fishing
one out.
He grabs his keys, mumbles, "Thanks for the cig," and slams the front door.
Amber snuffles, then coughs and fakes a sneeze to try to hide it.
Talking loudly from her room, she justifies his greatness to me.
She does not move and speaks only well of him.



Waltz With Wind

Amber Slagal

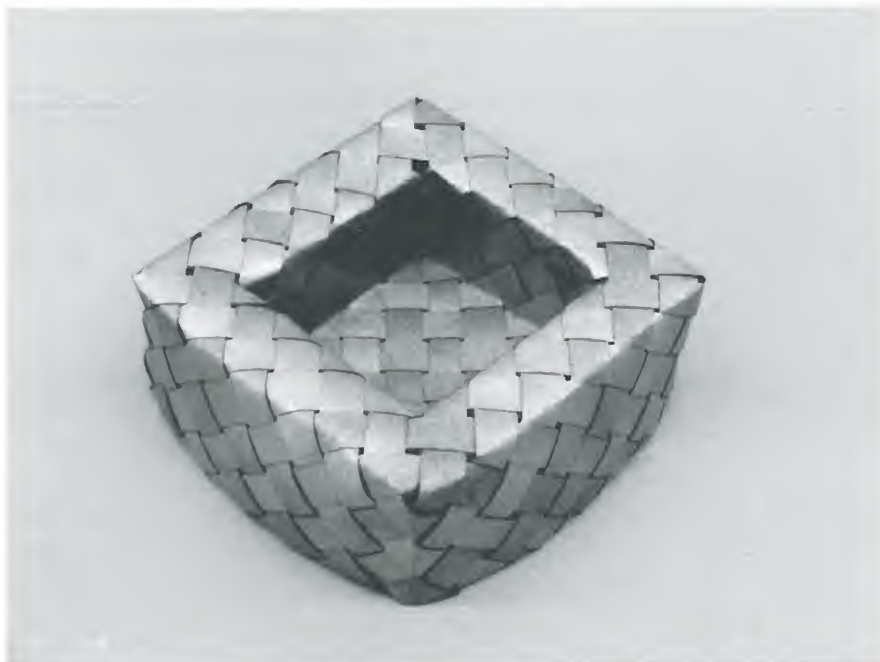
Sometimes
The wind wants to dance with me
We fly upon starlight
Together in breath
Holding me
Cradling me
In an eternal waltz
Winding among clouds
Grasping gorgeous gowns
Flowing unsteadily as we dance
Let go my body
Free to roam
Moving with no set plan
Over and backwards
Sliding over dew-stricken pastures
Creeping through silence
Dare to dance with the wind
One more ballroom prance
Before the sun cuts in



Altered Book

found objects

Alison Cole



Final Project

tar paper

Ashley Fetgatter



My Trip to the Ostrich Farm

Joe Larson

Ugly. Cowardly. Deadly.
The mighty ostrich tries to eat a metal bolt on the wall.
Click. Click. Click.
Its large, pointed beak cannot quite grasp the bolt,
But it keeps trying anyway.
I keep my distance.
As a bird, the ostrich is a failure.
Large and awkward, its wings lack the power for flight.
It almost seems to be an oversized turkey.
In any other setting, its appearance would be laughable.
But here, face to face with the graceless creature,
I shudder.

I think it is the height that bothers me most.
Its long, bare neck makes the bird a full ten feet tall.
It towers over me, gazing down with its large, stupid eyes.
Even as it watches me, it keeps biting the bolt.
Click. Click. Click.
Why the hell does it want that bolt?
I almost wish it would come loose from the wall,
Just so the ostrich would choke on it and die.
Who ever thought of farming ostriches anyway?
I'm sure it was some lying salesman years ago,
Promising hapless farmers that ostrich meat would be the next "big thing."
The ostrich craze quickly fizzled out,
Mainly because farmers realized that no one wants to eat something so ugly.

It only takes a quick glance to be repulsed:
Ostriches are mounted on reptilian legs with knees that bend backwards.



(Ostrich Farm, continued)

Every step makes the creature appear alien and unnatural.
In the wild, these legs were used to flee danger at up to forty miles an hour,
But this is not the savannah.
In domestication, ostriches have actually become more aggressive.
They have been known to kill farmers,
Using their scaly legs
To savagely kick their human masters to death
With a force of five hundred pounds per square inch.
Ostriches attack without warning or reason;
They are truly birds from Hell.

The creatures are raised to be eaten,
Yet they believe themselves to be superior to men.
To their simple brains —
Which are smaller than their eyes —
Height is everything.
This standard works both ways.
All it takes is a broom:
Hold it above your head
And you become the bigger ostrich.
It's true; they really are that stupid.
Click. Click. Click.

I want to humble the damn thing.
Take out a big stick and smack it on its little, ugly head;
Tell it that I am the superior creature;
Yet it looks at me with its big, vacant eyes, knowing one simple truth:
I am afraid.



A Christmas Sestina

Bernard Sell

I'm a lonely wandering Minstrel,
I've been out in this cold for hours.
My Charming situation is no accident.
Circumstances compel me to be ruthless.
And if thou wilt permit me to indulge myself,
I'll tell thee my cheerful winter's tale.

I begin this benignly Charming tale
Junior to myself, an apprentice Minstrel,
One content to freely waste his hours.
One day, I saw a gruesome, gruesome accident:
A carriage driver, cold and ruthless,
Hit some people, and nearly myself.

As people writhed, I thought to myself –
"This tragedy would make a Charming tale!
It has bathos worthy of a Minstrel!"
And so with grave resolve I spent my hours
Strumming Charming verse from Fate's accident.
From Providence my pluckings willful ruthless.

Now one may consider my next decision ruthless.
It pains me to admit that to myself,
But thou canst not forbid a Minstrel tell his tale.
I thought the Prince might enjoy a Charming Minstrel



(Christmas Sestina, continued)

And Lo, he did, for after some hours
He bade me go – to find another accident.

And so I skipped from accident to accident,
Recording grim and gory details while the ruthless
Peasantry hurled invective, meant for myself.
For their belov'd would soon star in my death tale.
Then with Charming cudgel chased they this Minstrel
Through the cobbled streets for hours and hours.

All the townsfolk revile me now, and the hours
At the castle – *that's* like watching an accident.
In his search for diversion our Prince is ruthless.
In fact, he commanded me to take it upon myself –
"Should chance deny thee gaunt and morbid tale,
Manufacture one, my Charming Minstrel!"

So in this hoary Yoolis frost I exile myself
And send this Charming, Charming warning to the ruthless:
Do something Useful; Don't be a Minstrel.



Masquerade

Amber Slagal

Her eyes are heavy laden
 With the sorrows of her youth
 And if you asked her what is wrong
 She'd deny with hollowed truth.

As long as she can smile
 For all that walk on by,
 No one would know the hurt and pain
 That deep within her lie.



At the Water's Edge

Mark R. Seely

Narcissus and his reflection:
a merger in which both parties lost.

But there was that single shining moment,
that ripple-distorted event horizon
where the corporeal passed through the ephemeral
and the ephemeral, vanquished,
turned in on itself,
a self-limiting boundary diminution
into the shimmering void,
and the corporeal
finally free,
alone in watery silence.



What I Learned Today

Becky Scherer

She has the most beautiful ankles
I think I have ever seen.
She is lying on her back underneath an oak tree

whose autumn wardrobe perfectly matches
the shade of red on her delicate toenails.
I am sitting across from her, near the spot

where she kicked off her black sandals —
they seem to have always been there,
and the grass grows around them.

The ground is damp
and surely we will rise to find wet patches on our blue jeans,
but the present beauty of the morning is too distracting to take notice.

I don't think she knows I am writing about her.
If I told her, she'd probably flip her hair, toss her head back,
and laugh. She has a beautiful laugh.

She crosses her ankles and stretches out,
makes a pillow of her hands for her fragile chestnut head.
From where I am sitting, I can see the arch of her eyelashes,

black, feathery, and innumerable.
She is staring up into the oblivion of branches under which she lies.
Whatever the melancholy leaves are causing her to think —

whatever memories she is reliving,
whatever places she is revisiting —
I am positive none of them can compare to her beauty.



Altered Book

found objects

Alison Cole



A Yellow Bird on Sesame Street

Amber Slagal

I'm standing in front of a mirror
patting down my yellow feathers.
It's been a long show today.
That damn Grover is so annoying,
but then again,
he gets that way when he smokes a joint before a shooting.
I always wonder if Cookie Monster and Grover's way
to get through the day is worth it.
I've never had the balls to jeopardize my job.
Elmo asked me if I wanted to help him host an intervention today
between scenes for my two high friends.
I, of course, ignored him.
No one really cares about anyone else.
It is all a sad attempt to look good for the CEOs and producers.
Bert filed for sexual harassment for the fourth time.
Ernie just can't keep his hands to himself.
I really should be getting home,
the street is violent at night.
The homes all look so jaded compared to when I first came here.
This famous street . . . I've walked on it for so many years.
It seems like I've been here for an eternity.
I'm getting much too old to do this, to play with kids.
I hate lying to them.
The world isn't a great shiny place.
There is not always a happy ending.



(Sesame Street, continued)

That pot at the end of the rainbow
holds all of my disappointment and downfalls.
It's not as easy as we put it on to be.
There's Oscar talking to his worm . . .
He has to be the sanest of us all:
Sitting in his trashcan —
Playing with his worm.
I'd like to be able to climb into his can and play with his worm.
I've gotten to the point where I'm just doing this show for the money.
Not the original plan I had
to teach children and help them grow;
enrich their blossoming lives.
Finally reaching my cold home,
I grab my teddy and
sit myself in my prickly nest.
Trying to find a comfortable position to lay my heavy beak,
I cry my awkward self to sleep.
When I wake, I will have another lovely day to play on
Sesame Street.



Things to do while on break

Jean Monfort

Hit the “snooze” button for the fifth time.

Reorganize book shelves by size of book.

Eat breakfast in your room, skip lunch, eat out for dinner.

Watch pointless TV.

Open your stats book and take four hours to do your homework while watching a sci-fi marathon.

Floss your teeth.

Nap.

Read the newspaper, but really just the comics.

Clean your desk.

Go for a walk.

Build another bookshelf.

Work on homework from another class, perhaps.

Try not to see how the hours are flying by on Sunday night.

Wake up Monday, eyes creeping open, resisting the “snooze” button

Knowing,

you forgot

something.



To Hobbes

Mark R. Seely

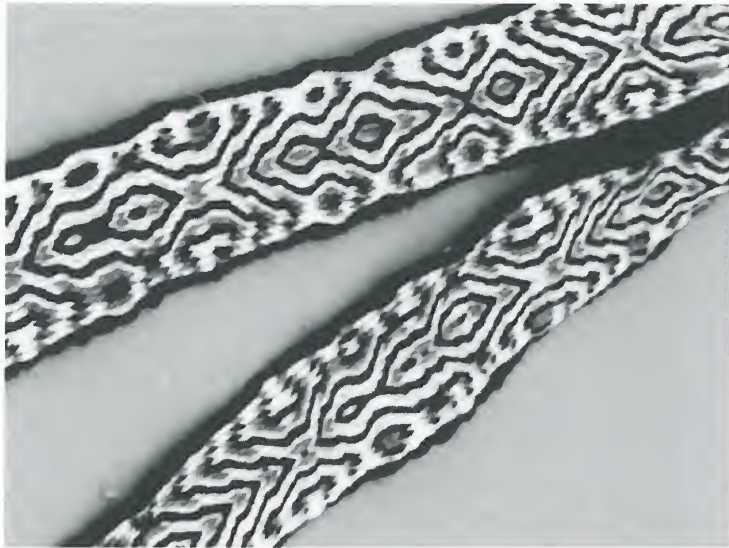
intestines
stretched across the valley –
winding asphalt strands
that palpitate anxiety

in stomach twisting knots
filled with cold bile
and cell phones that chirp
instead of birds

in a land where billboards
are a better use for trees
and sleep
is best taken in small doses

with your eyes open
so that you don't miss
anything important
on CNN

and we have become
compartmentalized –
the digestive system
of a ruminant leviathan.



Card Woven Band yarn

Nick Mallory



Constructing a Term Paper

Joe Larson

For writing papers,
There is only one commandment:
Thou shalt lie.
Forget about good writing,
Thorough research, and academic integrity.
All a good paper needs is dishonesty,
A strategic enigma inside a lie.
It starts with the little things:
Never do the required reading.
Facts and figures only get in the way.
Just make it up,
Let the creative juices flow.
Information is the enemy.
The only thing a thesis should prove
Is that you can write a fifty word sentence without saying anything.
Cite only obscure passages;
It makes you look thorough rather than lazy.
Link everything together using phrases like “symbolism” and “internal
motivation.”
It works every time.
Do everything at the last minute.
Time is meant to be wasted,
And homework is meant to be rushed.
Panic is the source of all greatness.
Just remember,
Grades have nothing to do with merit,
And school has nothing to do with learning.
A good student is nothing but a parrot,
And a degree is nothing worth earning.



Roadside Goddess
sticks

Bonnie Zimmer



Fast Enough For You

Becky Scherer

A million things could have happened
in the time between when you said goodbye and when you closed the door
behind you.

In the spirit of a sappy movie montage,
you could have turned and, with tears in your eyes,
thrown your arms around me,
changing your mind and swearing that you could never breathe unless I was
near.

You could have tripped on your way to the door—
we would have laughed and I'd have offered my hand to help you up
and when you gripped it, you'd remember the way it fit,
and realize that your fingers call the spaces between mine home.

Maybe I should have called out to you,
begged you not to leave me,
confessed every feeling that I've ever had for you,
confessed that you are my core.

With your fingers wrapped around the cool metal of the doorknob,
you could have pictured my sad and lonely self
sitting in the green chair behind you,
and finally decided that I am beautiful enough for you.



You could have stared hard into my eyes before turning,
read all the words on the grocery list of everything I wanted to tell you,
forgiven me for being less than what you needed in your life right then,
and surrendered your pride to a lifetime with the one who makes you laugh.

The moments it took you to
 close your mouth,
 turn away,
 place one foot before the other roughly eight times,
 open the door,
 and close it
were not long enough for me to commit all of you to memory,
for me to take all of you in;

but the click of the latch
in the brass handle
couldn't have come
fast enough for you.



The Day I Met Death

Joe Larson

If I should wake before I die,
Oops.
My bad.
It would be an odd scene:
Death is standing there,
Garbed in black with a Scythe in hand,
When I, having led a life of bad timing,
Ruin this one last grace
By waking up when I am supposed to die
Peacefully in my sleep.

Of course, none of this is unexpected.
My life is devoted to botching solemn occasions.
I always seem to be overdressed or underdressed,
And a few times not even dressed at all.
I tend to use the wrong fork to eat the wrong food
Off someone else's plate,
Or to use the wrong tone of voice to say the wrong thing
To someone who doesn't even speak English.
And now, to complete a life that is one continuous faux pas,
I awake when I should be asleep for my own death.
Death looks at me, and I at him.
It's a rather awkward moment.
Then Death shrugs, and so do I.
And I go back to sleep.



Intellectual Stimulation

Teresa Moreno

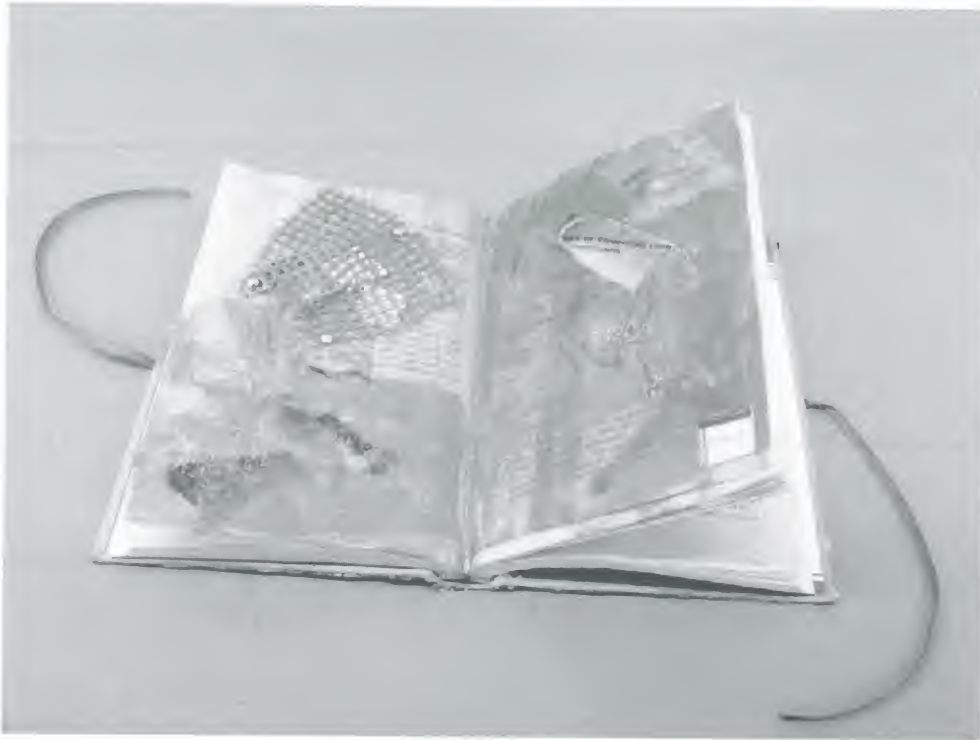
It's what our relationship has always been
Intellectual stimulation without the physical benefits.
The Flaming Lips play in the background
As he talks of his love for Hemingway.
I hear three clicks from his car,
And I picture his slender soft hands
Compulsively lock his car door.
His obsessive compulsiveness had always annoyed me.
It took the form of a mosquito bite
Sucking the energy out of me
And leaving me annoyed.
But I dealt with it—I loved him.
And as our conversation progressed to the music of Guided by Voices,
I wondered if he realized I called him Fuck Face
And if he can acknowledge,
My pitiful attempts to try to hate him.
I can hear in his voice he has no clue
So I bite my lower lip to prevent the words "I love you."
The conversation slowly draws to a close
As the topics of Pulp Fiction, Wilco, and Pearl Jam
Have all been discussed thoroughly.
We utter the over-rehearsed good-byes
And I hang up the phone with a sigh
"It's what our relationship has always been," I say,
As the tears start to form in my eyes
"Intellectual stimulation," I repeat
"Merely Intellectual stimulation . . ."



Altered Book

found objects

Michelle Klotzbach



Altered Book

found objects

Erika Osborne



Things to Do in my Swimming Pool on a Sunday Evening

Danny Waclaw

Jump in and make a giant splash, upsetting the lazy family dog,
Swim laps around and around the pool until your limbs become numb,
Wait a minute, and do it again.
Lie on a raft that never quite stays completely afloat,
Slowly drink a frigid can of Pepsi, making sure no bees are inside it,
Attempt reading Bill Clinton's 1000-page-plus autobiography, again,
Stay cool under the hot sun while listening to *Straight, No Chaser*.
Run the rope across the pool to barricade the younger ones
 who are bound to jump in,
Put on some goggles to protect eyes from the little splashes,
Fall off the raft to humor them,
Play submarine with younger brother,
Continue playing patiently until they're done.
Get out for a minute to light the tiki torches.
Slip back in on top of the sun-warmed raft,
Lay still for a minute and plan the week,
Resist worrying about Monday,
And that paper that's due,
And that unread book.
Air dry.
Rest.



Ode to the Metro

Joe Larson

With the horse power of a riding lawn mower,
The 1992 Geo Metro convertible was the handicap midget of the car kingdom.
The three-cylinder version I owned was a rarity;
Most came with four for the purpose of symmetry,
But in this model they took one out
For the driver who could not handle speeds over fifty miles an hour.
Sure, it could go faster,
But when it exceeded sixty,
The whole frame started to shake.
It was technically a sports car.
To make things better, it had a manual transmission.
It hit fourth gear around thirty miles an hour,
And accelerating in fifth was an exercise in patience.
There was never a time when I didn't have the gas pedal floored,
And yet I never sped.
It just wasn't possible.
The irony is that my parents bought the Metro for me so I would be safe.
They thought that slow speed equaled safe travel.
In reality, the car weighed half as much as a normal vehicle
And was practically made of cardboard.
If I hit anything larger than a squirrel,
I was guaranteed to die.
I loved that car.



(Metro, continued)

In appearance, the Metro most closely resembled a clown car.
It was small and white with a canvass top,
With tape on the back window where the plastic had somehow been cut.
It was only a two-seater,
So carrying a third person was a bit of a struggle.
The easiest method was just to put the extra man in the trunk.
A fabric flap functioned as a built-in air hole,
A clear sign that the back compartment was meant for hauling human cargo.

At forty-six highway miles to the gallon,
The Metro was the perfect cruising car.
It was best used with the top down on summer nights.
The plan was always to use it for dating,
But that never quite worked out —
A disappointment really
Because girls always seemed to like the car a lot more than they liked me.
Failing to attract any members of the opposite sex,
I had to settle for filling the passenger seat with one friend or another.
We would drive around Danville aimlessly for hours,
Discussing girls, school, or whatever else came to mind.
Who am I kidding? —
We basically just talked about girls.
Eventually, we began taking the Metro out on country roads,
Just for a change.
Driving for five or six hours at a time,
We would sometimes cover a few hundred miles in a night without getting
anywhere.



We searched for adventure in rural Illinois, but seldom found any.

Those nights all blur together, except for one —
The last trip of the Metro.

It was the end of my senior year,
And my parents finally recognized that the car was a deathtrap.
It had to go, but not before I took it out one last time.
This trip had to mean something.
My friend and I decided to chart a new course,
And after three hours,
The sun had set and we had no idea where we were.
Neither of us reached for the map.
The road was flat and straight,
And the engine ran beautifully.
I shifted into fifth gear.
The frame of the car shook, but neither of us cared.
We were lost, but we were fast.

Measure



2004 - 2005